

Message Text

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DEPT PASS OAU COLLECTIVE

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PDIP, CD
SUBJECT: MEETING AND GREETING

SUMMARY. ON MONDAY, JULY 17, AND TUESDAY, JULY 18, THE
LAST TWO STRAGGLERS HEADING FOR THE KHARTOUM OAU SUMMIT
CONFERENCE TRANSITTED NDJAMENA. IF THIS TUNE UP IS ANYTHING
OF A PREVIEW OF WHAT WE CAN EXPECT DURING THE RETURN DELUGE
OF HOMEWARD BOUND VIPS AFTER THE CONFERENCE, ALL IS NOT WELL.

1. PRESIDENT MOUSSA TRAORE OF MALI FINALLY LANDED AT 1225
ON MONDAY, JULY 17 AFTER HIS PLANE PREVIOUSLY HAD BEEN
ANNOUNCED FOR 1100 AND 1145 ARRIVALS--EACH OF WHICH NECESSITATED
TRIPS TO THE AIRPORT BY DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND GOC OFFICIALS.
WHEN THE BOEING 727 TOUCHED DOWN, IT WAS APPARENT PRECISION
TIMING OF ARRANGEMENTS HAD NOT BEEN PERFECTED. FIRST, THE
AIRPLANE ALMOST OVERSHOT THE TAXIWAY AND REQUIRED A
SCREECHING HALT TO TURN AT THE APPOINTED SPOT. SECOND,
WHEN IT ARRIVED ON THE RUNWAY APRON IN FRONT OF THE
HONOR GUARD AND ASSEMBLED PERSONALTIES, NO AIRPORT
OFFICIAL WAS THERE TO GUIDE THE PLANE TO THE REFUELING
POINT. THE PILOT HAD TO SIT FOR SEVERAL LONG MINUTES
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WHILE THE TOWER EXPLAINED HOW FAR HE SHOULD ADVANCE
AND WHERE HE SHOULD TURN. HALF-WAY THROUGH THIS,
PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER ZAKARIA (WHO IS ALSO A
PILOT) SUDDENLY BROKE RANKS AND LEFT THE RECEIVING
LINE TO ADVANCE OUT ON THE TARMAC. IT WAS OBVIOUS
HIS MILITARY SENSE WAS IMPELLING HIM TO SERVE AS GUIDE
FOR THE BEWILDERED AIR MALI PILOT BUT, AFTER A LONG

MINUTE'S HESITATION, DICTATES OF PROTOCOL WON OUT, AND HE RETURNED TO THE FOLD WITH A RESIGNED LOOK AND SHRUG OF THIS SHOULDERS. AS SOON AS THE FRENCH PILOT HALTED HIS 727 IN THE PROPER PLACE, A TRUCK-DRIVEN MOBILE GANGWAY WAS DISPATCHED TO THE FRONT DOOR OF THE PLANE. FOLLOWING FIVE MINUTES OF FUTILE JOCKEYING WHILE VICE PRESIDENT DJIME AND HIS ENTOURAGE STOOD HELPLESSLY AT PLANESIDE, IT WAS DECIDED THERE WAS NO WAY TO ADJUST THE RAMP AT THE PROPER ANGLE SO THAT THE LAST THREE FEET OF THE STAIRWAY WOULD EXTEND. IT WAS THEREFORE DRIVEN AWAY AND A SMALLER RAMP WAS WHEELED INTO PLACE BY HAND. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS ONE SEEMED TO BE PERMANENTLY LOCKED INTO PLACE AT THE HEIGHT FOR CHAD'S PRESIDENTIAL CARAVELLE--AT LEAST A THREE FOOT DROP FROM THE DOORWAY TO THE FIRST STEP. FIVE MINUTES OF STRUGGLING WITH THE INFERNAL MACHINE AND IT WAS DECIDED THAT, DESPITE THE IGNOMINTY OF IT ALL, PRESIDENT TRAORE WOULD DESCEND BY THE SELF-CONTAINED REAR ENTRANCE STAIRWELL.

2. ALL OF THE FOREGOING, OF COURSE, PALED TO INSIGNIFICANCE THE FOLLOWING DAY WHEN IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT MAURITANIA'S NEW PRESIDENT COL. SALEK WAS TO ARRIVE. NOT ONLY WAS THE PLANE LATE, BUT AFTER VICE PRESIDENT DJIME ADVANCED TO PLANESIDE IN FRONT OF THE MASSED TROOPS, HONOR GUARD, CABINET OFFICERS AND DIPLOMATIC CORPS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOTHING HAPPENED. AFTER ABOUT FIVE MINUTES OF DISCUSSION AND THE SCURRYING UP AND DOWN THE RAMP OF SEVERAL PROTOCOL OFFICIALS, DJIME RETURNED TO SHAKE HANDS AND INFORM US WE COULD LEAVE THE AIRPORT BECAUSE SALEK WAS NOT ON BOARD. ACCORDING TO THE VICE PRESIDENT, DESPITE THE GOC HAVING RECEIVED AN OFFICIAL TELEGRAM INFORMING IT OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE HEAD OF STATE, ONLY THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS ON THE PRESIDENTIAL CARAVELLE. AS THE WHOLE OFFICIAL WELCOMING COMMITTEE TROOPED OUT, KJIME SAID TO SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS GALMAI THAT HE THROUGHT THE LATTER SHOULD GO BACK ON BOARD TO WELCOME THE FOREIGN MINISTER. GALMAI REMONSTRATED HE HAD NO INTENTION OF GOING BUT, AFTER SOME DISCUSSION, IT WAS AGREED THAT COURTESY DICTATED HE DO SO. AS THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS DEPARTED, GALMAI WAS SEEN SCUFFING HIS FEET AND LIGHTING A CIGARETTE AS HE SLOWLY RETURNED TO THE MALIAN AIRCRAFT WHICH STOOD IN SPLENDID ISOLATION IN THE MIDDLE OF THE AIRPORT. DALSIMER

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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